

How to Make a Collage

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A collage is a work of art composed of numerous materials, such as paper, newsprint, photographs, ribbons or other objects attached to background support, such as plain paper. A collage can even be made with physical materials or electronic images, attaching them to a digital background. Originating from the French word "coller", meaning "to glue", the collage allows you to experiment with a wide range of materials to achieve amazing end results. This article provides a sample of the many possibilities limited only by your creativity and imagination.

Method 1

Paper collage

- 1 Collect the materials needed for making a paper collage.** Here are some possible materials:
 - Use construction paper, copy paper, paper bags, tissue paper, marbled paper, handmade paper, etc. The paper can be either soft or hard, or a mixture of both.
 - Use cut-outs from magazines or newsprint. Fashion and news magazines can feature several collage-worthy images. Newsprint can add a fun texture to a collage, as well; just be aware that dyes may run sometimes.
 - Find old scraps of wallpaper. You might have some leftover in a closet, or you can buy small sample swatches from a wallpaper store.
 - Make use of different foils or tapes. Use the aluminum foil from the kitchen, or colored masking or duct tape.
 - Use photographs. Cutting images from old photographs can lend your collage a retro feel. Just make sure you're not cutting up the only copy you have of a photo that you might need later.
- 2 Fold, cut or tear the paper into different shapes.** You can use scissors or a craft knife to make different shapes. Alternatively, you can make rough tears on the ends of the paper pieces for more texture or a less controlled look.
 - Cut out a whole picture, an identifiable part, or just enough to evoke texture, color, or feeling.
 - To make a word, cut out letters from sources which use differing fonts.
- 3 Develop a theme.** You might have been assigned a theme, or maybe you came up with one as you collected materials. Either way, build your collage around a central idea or image.
- 4 Consider adding embellishments.** While not essential, embellishments can take the collage up a notch by adding depth, interest and sparkle. Use ribbons, beads, string, feathers or fabric in the paper collage. Find these items around the house, or purchase them at a craft store.
- 5 Figure out what you're going to glue the collage onto.** You can use a piece of paper, a large piece of cardstock or part of a cardboard box, for instance. Whatever you choose, make sure it's strong enough to handle several more layers of weight and that it will be easy to display.
- 6 Assemble the pieces before you glue them.** Although optional, it's recommended that you try. Once you have everything you want to put on your collage, spread it to design the collage before proceeding. Lay it out on a large surface like a table or floor. Build the items in layers, starting with the background and moving forward. This should give you a good idea of what your end product will look like before you commit to any gluing. If you want to remember it exactly, take a picture of your test run. Ideas for collage designs include:

- A landscape or a seascape
- A fractal
- A person's image, such as a pop star or someone who wears highly identifiable clothes or head wear, such as a tiara
- Newspaper people - use the time-old tradition to make newspaper people and then design them into the collage
- Animals; for example, use small paper pieces or stamps to form a shape of an animal such as a cat, crocodile or bee. Draw the shape on the paper first and fill in the space by gluing the paper pieces inside the lines
- A mosaic or an eclectic jumble; the mosaic can follow a shape or it can simply be a pattern or a jumble
- The alphabet; cut letters out of the paper and either make the alphabet or words on the collage
- Patterns using only a single shape, such as circles, squares, etc.; repeated patterns are also very effective as a collage.

7 Glue the collage. Starting with the background and working forward, glue the pieces of the collage onto the base. Use regular white glue, a glue stick or rubber cement, and work with precision.

- Try to arrange the collage around one central piece that you think is striking or interesting.
- Remember that not every piece has to be glued flat. Try crumpling or folding to achieve a different texture.

8 Let the collage dry. Given that the collage might contain several layers of glue, allow it ample time to dry.

- For a small collage, an hour or so should be sufficient.
- For a larger piece, you might want to let it sit overnight or use a very low air blowing fan.

Method 2

Digital Collage

Digital collages are a great way to show off your photos and share them with your friends and loved ones!

1 Add Your Photos

- Upload from your computer, import from your social network, or search the internet for photos to add to your collage.
- Once uploaded, select the photos you'd like, and add them to your project.

2 Customize your collage

- Choose a shape for your collage.
- To manually arrange your photos, uncheck the lock alignment box. To have the pictures automatically placed, leave the box checked.
- To move photos around, click and drag the image to the position you want.
- Apply filters, borders, background and/or a title to your collage.
- Before:
- After:

3 Share/Save your photo collage

- Once you've customized your digital collage to your liking, share it with friends, or save directly to your computer.

Method

Fabric collage

3

1 Collect the pieces of fabric you're going to use for making the collage. Look in your own fabric supplies, in your wardrobe for unwanted clothing, in thrift stores and in craft stores for great sources of fabric. Some examples include:

- Leftover scraps from sewing projects
- Cut-outs of fabric designs that you love
- Cut-outs from beloved pieces of clothing that are past their wearing date (great for memory sakes of children's clothing)
- Quilt fabrics/fat quarters
- Special fabrics like tulle, organdy, silk, satin, etc.
- Thread, wool, yarn, string, ribbons, lace, netting, etc.
- Sewing embellishments such as buttons, sequins, sew-on patches, etc.

2 Check the textures. Fabrics tend to come in a range of textures and thicknesses, meaning that you'll need to incorporate these differences to best effect in the collage.

3 Select a suitable background. There are some suggestions for backgrounds outlined above but always bear in mind that fabric may stick differently from paper, so not all options will be useful. Do a test glue on the background you'd like to use before proceeding, to make sure that the fabric will stay in place. Some ideas for backgrounds include: other fabric, an unwanted wall-hanging, an item of unwanted clothing, paper or cardboard, an object such as an old stuffed toy needing a facelift or a lampshade, etc.

- Use clear drying glue that is suitable for both fabric and the backing you're using.

4 Create the design on paper by drawing it into place. For design ideas, see the suggestions outlined in the method above for making a paper collage. Once you have a design in mind, match the appropriately textured and colored fabric pieces accordingly.

5 Cut and arrange the fabric materials following your design. It's fine to stick one piece on top of another, so be bold.

- Keep the textures in mind when creating impressions of items, animals or faces. For example, use wool or fluffed up fabric to create a sheep's body or use yarn to create hair around a face.
- Wool, thread or yarn can be wound around in spirals to create flowers, a sun or moon, faces, etc.
- Buttons and sequins are great for all sorts of image creation, such as making flowers, eyes on a face or animal shapes.

6 Allow to dry. Place on display.

Method
4

Sand collage

Sand makes for an excellent collage material and is a good collage choice for young children.

1 Assemble the materials needed. These are simply - a paper or cardstock background base, clear-drying craft glue, sand, a pencil and a glue brush.

2 Draw the design you'd like onto paper. Simpler designs are best for small children; let them draw whatever they like.

3 Follow the lines or insides of the drawn lines with glue, using the glue brush. If the design is intricate or large, do this in small steps, to allow you to work with the glue while it's still wet.

Sprinkle the sand over the glue. This can be done using your hand or a small paper cup.

4

5 When done, **tip the excess sand off**. The remaining sand will outline the design.

Method
5

Nature collage

- 1 Find suitable items out in nature.** This collage is a good one after you've been hiking or walking in natural areas and you've collected things you found along the way. Suitable items include:
 - Seashells, broken and whole; carapaces of insects
 - Flowers (these can be pressed and then used)
 - Dried grasses
 - Leaves
 - Seeds and nuts,
 - coconut shell '
 - straw,
 - and others,etc...
- 2 Make sure that the items are dry before using them.** If not, they may rot or go mildewy on the collage.
- 3 Choose a suitable background.** Paper, smooth bark, cardstock, recycled cardboard, etc. are all good choices for the background.
- 4 Design the collage.** Perhaps you'd like to make a nature scene, such as arranging dried flowers as they'd appear in nature, or a clump of dried grasses. Or, maybe make a landscape or seascape using the items.
- 5 Glue the items in place.** Use clear-drying craft glue. Double check that the items are actually sticking to the background.
 - If you want to preserve plant material used in a collage, make a "glaze". Dilute PVA glue with a little water. Brush this over the whole of the paper; this glazes the paper. Arrange the plant material on the glazed paper. Brush over all of the plant material with the same glaze. You must cover every possible bit of the plant material. Once fully dried, the glaze will protect the plant material for years and the effect will leave the collage shiny. Note that this can damage more delicate plant material, so be careful.
- 6 Allow to dry.** Place the collage on display or take photos of it and share online.

Method
6

Electronic collage

- 1 Choose an easy-to-use photo program.** You can edit photos in several different forms of software depending on your computer and your budget. Choose a basic photo editor unless you're already skilled in a more advanced version; you can improve your skills as you make more collages this way.
- 2 Develop a theme.** You might have been assigned a theme, or maybe you came up with one as you collected materials. Either way, build the electronic collage around a central idea, image or pattern. Having a theme will help you to find photos and images more easily.
- 3 Assemble suitable materials.** Search the internet for images or fonts that you think will be ideal for the collage. Or, you could scan in old photos, fabric swatches, magazine clippings or other items you would use on a paper collage. Use images that inspire you.
 - Visit Pinterest for inspiration; simply look for photos following themes that you like, such as cupcakes, horses, racing cars, beautiful people, whatever!

4 Alter the images as required. Shape and color the images into interesting shapes or forms using the photo program's cropping and shading tools. Don't be a slave to the contour of the image exactly—go with what works best for your design.

- Additionally, you can play with transparency, clarity, tone and any other quality the photo program allows for.

5 Build layers. Start building your collage in layers. Begin at the bottom, with the digital background, and work up.

6 Save often! Click the Save button often, in case the computer program crashes. You don't want to lose all your hard work.

7 Print out the collage. This step is optional, if you'd like to display the image on a wall, etc. Choose a type of paper on which to print the collage. You could choose a shiny, high-gloss paper or a more matte, flat option. Whatever it is, it should match your overall theme and be suitable for the end use.

Method 7

Displaying collages

1 Consider how you'd like to display the final collage. There are several choices, such as:

- Simply hang on the wall as it is
- Frame it either using cardstock or a wooden frame, then hang or lean on a shelf
- Take a photo and share it online (if it's not already digital)
- Share online if digital; use photo and craft sites, as well as social media sites to let people know about your craft efforts
- Consider ways of including the collage into other art or craft projects, such as varnishing it into a wardrobe panel, decoupageing it onto a wooden box or sewing a fabric one onto clothing.

Community Q&A

Question

How do I make a simple collage?

wikiHow Contributor
Community Answer

Find some photos or artwork, and attach them to a wall or poster using glue or tape. You can overlap the pictures, or leave some spaces between them.

Question

What programs can I use to make a digital collage?

wikiHow Contributor
Community Answer

You can use just about any image editing program, such as Paint, Paint Shop Pro, and Photoshop. Most computers will already come with Paint (Paintbrush for Mac) already installed.

Question

Can I use objects like toys to make a collage, or can I only use flat/paper objects?

wikiHow Contributor
Community Answer

The easiest objects to work with are flat and made of paper, but you can use some small objects, such as twigs, leaves, pebbles, and shells. If you'd like to use larger objects, like toys or ornaments, you might be interested in creating a shadow box, which is essentially a 3D collage.

Question

How do I make a collage with soaked newspapers?

wikiHow Contributor
Community Answer

Do the same process you would do with a regular collage, such as a magazine collage. Instead of putting a base coat of glue to stick it to the base, just place the newspapers on the board. Then, when the collage dries, add on a top coat of mod podge so that the papers will stay on and have a glossy finish.

Question

I want to make an art collage from art magazines. What kind of glue do I use? And can I shellac it when it is done?

wikiHow Contributor
Community Answer

You can use practically any type of glue to glue on your collage pieces. I would recommend Mod Podge or tacky glue, but hot glue or school glue will work also. For the finish, I always cover my collages with Mod Podge gloss. Any of these glues are easy to find. (I have also had good experiences with scrapbooking glue if that is what you have.)

Question

How do I make a collage with fewer pictures?

wikiHow Contributor
Community Answer

You can use bigger pictures so it takes fewer to cover up the base, or you can use a smaller base so there is less space to cover. You can also just leave some empty space so that you'll have room to add more pictures in the future.

Tips

- If the materials on the collage do not stick perfectly after gluing, you can brush a diluted glue mixture (about 3 parts water to 1 part glue) over the whole collage once it is finished to seal the piece.
- Make your collage however *you* want it to be. Don't be afraid to experiment with different techniques or images; you'll learn by doing.
- Be creative!
- The back of the collage must reflect the back of the object you create on the front.

- You can also combine digital and paper image editing by printing edited images to include in a paper or other style of collage.

Warnings

- Make your collage on some newspaper so you don't get any glue on the work surface.
- Always take care when using scissors. Supervise young children when cutting is involved.
- It's best to avoid using Gorilla Glue, tacky glue, or hot glue on a collage if you're working with paper alone. These glues won't work as well as regular white glue, a glue stick or rubber cement. Ask your local craft retailer for advice if you're unsure.
- Some fabric does not stick to glue.

Things You'll Need

- ☐ Glue or paste
- ☐ Scissors or a craft knife
- ☐ A base, such as a piece of stiff paper or cardstock
- ☐ Images and words/letters
- ☐ Photo editing software (optional)
- ☐ A bin to put the extra, unwanted paper in
- ☐ A plastic bag for the wanted but un-glued collage items